

**Statement of Dr. Bryan S. Finkle, Chief Forensic Toxicologist for the
NFL's Policies on Steroids and Substances of Abuse**

I am pleased to have been asked to participate in today's hearing before the Government Reform Committee. I applaud the Committee's interest in the NFL's steroid testing program and its impact on young people.

By way of background, for more than 40 years I have been a forensic toxicologist with continuing experience in the toxicology of substance abuse and at least 20 years in sports (anti-doping) toxicology. My association with the NFL's steroid policy dates to its inception. Currently I serve as Chief Forensic Toxicologist for the NFL's steroids and substances of abuse programs, for which I have been jointly selected and approved by the League and NFL Players Association. I am responsible for all technical aspects of the programs including oversight of the laboratory performance, quality control and interpretation of test results. I also provide support to the substance abuse treatment program and manage research studies designed to evaluate analytical technology and improve testing.

The NFL steroid program is a carefully crafted, thoughtfully negotiated program which is designed to detect and prevent substance use and abuse. It has evolved over more than ten years to its present level of sophistication.

Importantly, it is a living document, one that requires the mutual effort and agreement of the NFL, NFLPA, its players, and its teams. The laboratory analysis of urine specimens to detect prohibited drugs and their metabolites is just one essential part of an overall comprehensive program. Analysis not only can accurately identify drugs that are being used, but acts as a deterrent

(creating the risk of being detected and the adverse consequences that occur as a result) to those who might otherwise attempt to cheat.

Scientifically speaking, the program features an extensive testing protocol involving detailed procedures for specimen collection, as well as defined analytical methods and quality control processes. These practices closely follow those recommended by WADA and USADA, and I am confident that they would satisfy any reasonable measure of review.

Importantly, through periodic review of these methods and processes, systematic improvements have been made to the program over the past several years: for example, working with scientists at the UCLA Olympic Laboratory, we have taken advantage of refined techniques for detecting many substances. In addition, we routinely consult with a variety of outside experts to assist us in addressing specific concerns, such as the effects of ephedrine use on heat and hydration or issues associated with growth hormones.

While the range of substances specifically banned by the NFL is less extensive than WADA, the NFL prohibited list is designed specifically for football. Unlike WADA, which is responsible for monitoring drug use in more than one hundred diverse sports worldwide, the NFL monitors a relatively small population of athletes with common characteristics (young males with exceptional strength and speed) and performance goals. Accordingly, the program design is based upon the intelligence and experience gained over the past decade and is tailored to

meet the NFL's goals of protecting the health of its athletes and preserving the integrity of the sport.

The NFL banned list is wide-ranging, continuously reviewed and frequently revised. Testing for these substances requires exacting forensic and scientific standards. Currently, however, there is only one WADA-certified laboratory in the United States--the Olympic Lab at UCLA--that can routinely meet these standards of practice.

In order to address the need for additional laboratory capacity, the NFL has joined with the United States Anti-Doping Agency to fund the development of a new laboratory, the Sports Medicine Research and Testing Laboratory located at the University of Utah. When fully operational next year, it will be WADA-certified and will work in close collaboration with the Olympic Lab at UCLA. It will have the most up-to-date instruments and technology, and will be staffed by experienced analysts and toxicologists. In addition to testing, a primary function of the laboratory will be to conduct sponsored research studies to broaden the understanding of performance enhancing substances and to develop new analytical methods. It will also be available to assist other sports programs. The NFL's collaboration with USADA to fund testing and research is unique in the United States and is evidence of its serious intent to address steroid and other substance abuse issues as they affect the health of athletes and the sport.

In summary, for the past fifteen years the NFL has had a comprehensive testing program for the detection of steroids and other performance enhancing substances. It is founded on the best science and technology and is bolstered by the continuing cooperation of the League and Players Association. Overall, it represents a proactive effort to eliminate the use and associated health risks of performance enhancing substances from its sport.